means for comparing said input job number with said associated job number and if said input job number matches said associated job number associating said printer with said print request message identifying the particular printer as the printer for receiving the print request message, and printing from said identified particular printer a document corresponding to said image data [if said input job number matches said associated job number].--

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8 are pending, Claims 1-4, and 8 having been amended by way of the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-8 were rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,843,571 to Notermans et al in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,825,988 to Collard et al.

First, Applicants wish to thank Examiner Popovici for the personal interview of November 15, 2000 at which time the outstanding issues in the present case were discussed. During the discussion, Applicant presented arguments and amendments substantially as indicated in the present amendment. While no agreement was reached, Examiner Popovici indicated that he would examine the amendments and arguments upon formal filing of this amendment.

Turning now to the merits, Applicant's invention is directed to a system and method for printing from a user terminal to a network printer. Prior art systems of this type have been problematic in that a user must select one of the network printers as a prerequisite for printing the user's document. Consequently, when a user prints a document, the document is destined for a predetermined printer without regard to the availability of the printer. If the predetermined

printer is unavailable, the user may have to wait at the printer for a substantial period of time for the print request to be executed by the printer. In the case where the user's print request is executed immediately, the document may be printed before the user arrives at the printer thereby subjecting confidential documents to security problems concerns. Applicant's invention overcomes these flexibility and security problems.

Specifically, Applicant's independent claims 1-4 and 8 recite a network print method and system including a first terminal for producing a print request message not uniquely identifying a device for printing image data (in claims 1-3 the first terminal is the computer terminal), a second network terminal for receiving the print request message and producing a job number associated with the print request message (in claims 1-3 the second terminal is the host computer). Also recited is that a job number is input into a particular printer of the network and based on the input job number the second terminal associates the particular printer with the print request message and identifies the particular as the printer for receiving the print request message (in Claim 3 this can also be performed by the printer). The print request message and related image data are then sent to the particular printer. Thus, each of Applicant's independent claims as amended now clearly recite that the original print request message does not uniquely identify a device for printing and that only after a job number is input to a particular printer on the network the particular printer is associated with the print request message and identified as the printer to receive the print request message. As discussed in the amendment filed August 7, 2000, by not uniquely identifying the output device in the print request message, the users of the present invention can associate a particular printer, that they have found to be available or otherwise preferable to them, to the print request message by inputting the print request job number at that particular printer, causing that particular printer to print the request.

In contrast, Notermans discloses a system that causes a print request to be interrupted until a second command is received by the printer. Such an approach allows the user to configure the printer for a special job or alternatively, to co-locate himself with the printer prior to the commencement of the print request. However, Notermans does not disclose a first network terminal for producing a print request message not uniquely identifying a device for printing image data or a second network terminal for associating a particular printer with the print request message based on a job number input to the particular network printer as claimed in Claims 1-4 and 8. As discussed in the November 15th interview, even if the central control station is considered the second network terminal (i.e the host terminal) of Applicant's device, this control station simply does not associate a particular printer with the print request message based on the input of a job number into the particular printer. That is, as soon as the user sends a print request message from the work station 1 of Notermans, the print request message is already associated with a predetermined printer regardless of what the user inputs to the printer. This is clear throughout the specification of Notermans which identifies printer 3 as the only printer for handling print requests. Thus, Notermans is directed to a system that creates print requests that predetermine the output device for printing the request, thereby requiring that the destination printer be prospectively determined when the print request is initiated from a computer terminal.

Collard discloses a system that allows a print request to be stored in memory until a second command is received by the printer. Such an approach allows the user to control the timing and order of the execution of the print jobs held in memory since each file to be printed is uniquely identified by a file name, and printed from memory only when that file name is given as a go-ahead command from the printer. Thus, Notermans does not disclose a first network terminal for producing a print request message not uniquely identifying a device for printing

image data or a second network terminal for associating a particular with the print request message based on a job number input tot he particular network printer as claimed in Claims 1-4 and 8. Collard, as with Notermans discussed above, is directed to a different system that requires that creates print requests that predetermine the output device for printing the request, thereby requiring that the destination printer be prospectively determined when the print request is initiated from a computer terminal.
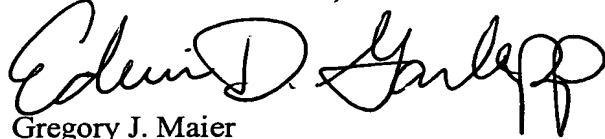
Finally, as discussed in the November 15, 2000 interview, in order to expedite issuance of a patent in this case, Claims 1-4 and 8 have now been amended to clarify that the particular printer to receive the print request command is identified based on the job number input to the particular printer. As discussed above, this limitation is simply not taught in either Notermans or Collard.

As independent Claims 1-4 and 8 patentably define over the cited references as detailed above, Claims 5-7, and 9-11 which depend from these independent claims also patentably defines over the cited references.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, and in light of the above comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 1-8, as amended, is patentably distinguishing over the prior art. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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